Rejoinder to Dean E. Barrios’s comments on S.C. Monsod’s column

Dean Barrios’s comments really have to do with his interpretation of the following statements, both of which he accepts:

1. In regressions performed, one cannot statistically rule out the possibility that the variable [*academic calendar*] has no significant influence on the variables of interest, namely [*international faculty*] and [*international students*].
2. By contrast, one can statistically rule out the possibility that [*papers per faculty*] and [*students per faculty*] have no effect on [*international faculty*] and that [*papers per faculty*] and [*international faculty*] have no effect on [*international students*].

In particular, he interprets the result (a) by saying that “Non-rejection of the null hypothesis does not necessarily mean that the null hypothesis is true. In statistics, we find evidence against the null hypothesis and we can only conclude that the null is false but not that the null is true.” This essentially repeats the old saw that says, “Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence.”

Dean Barrios’s comments would suffice as a critique only if one were talking of pure statistical inference. The difference between him and me—and the difference between statistics and econometrics—is that I proceed from a theory, to wit: that excellence in research and teaching is fundamental and prior to reputation, and that this is what attracts international faculty and students. I gave external reasons besides statistics (e.g., common experience and well-known examples) why this was bound to be the case. I hypothesised moreover that these fundamental factors would trump something like the academic calendar. The result (b) supported this hypothesis. So did the result (a).

The proponents of the shift, however, are effectively saying, “There must be *some* relationship; you just didn’t look hard enough.” This is like the police finding a corpse with throat slit, hogtied in an apartment, with drawers and closets ransacked. They easily come to hypothesise a case of robbery-murder. But one colleague says, “Look, his refrigerator is unplugged and full of rotting food. You cannot rule out the possibility he starved himself!”

Is it possible the academic calendar plays a substantial role in some hidden, mysterious way we have not discovered? Certainly. But where is the theory that says so? In what universe is excellence in research and teaching primarily advanced by a change in the academic calendar? Where are the supporting hypotheses and outside evidence that even make that notion plausible?

Some evidence has been found in support of my hypothesis, although I never pretended this was the last word on the matter. But what is the hypothesis of the proponents, and where is the evidence to support it?

It is the obligation of the proponents (not mine) to do the following: (a) provide a coherent and persuasive theory or model of why a shift in the academic calendar is a weightier and more urgent factor in attracting international faculty and international students; (b) present some evidence of it, or at least (c) explain why it not significantly supported by the evidence on hand.

I suggest it is only fair to give them enough time to do these things. While we wait for them, however, it also seems only prudent that we keep the current calendar.

**E. de Dios**